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ABSTRACT

Although teacher evaluation is well established in other English-speaking countries, it has only recently become a significant educational issue in Great Britain. In 1984 the School of Education at Great Britain's Open University began research on pioneering efforts in teacher evaluation among the country's individual schools. The first stage of this research, reported in this paper, focused on gathering and classifying information on the teacher evaluation programs. Using information volunteered by 56 schools, the researchers prepared a database and sent each school its own entry for verification. The teacher evaluation systems tended to share the following features: (1) appraisal was routine and ongoing; (2) the system was explicit rather than implicit; (3) the methodology was discernable and understood by the teachers; and (4) followup was provided in the form of faculty development. Four approaches to appraisal were identified, and appraisal methods used in these approaches included observation, interviews, use of documents, consultation with other individuals, and self-evaluation. Although the primary purpose of these independently developed programs appeared to be formative, with faculty development the central goal, the government is now advocating nationwide adoption of the kind of summative evaluation program in which the schools have shown little interest. (PGD)

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Nascent Schemes for Teacher Appraisal: Developments in Britain

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Introduction

Although teacher appraisal is well established in the USA, Canada, Australia and South Africa, it has only recently become a significant educational issue in Britain, where it is presently the subject of much controversy since it has become an issue in the long drawn out teachers' pay dispute. The Secretary of State for Education has announced that legislation is to be introduced to mandate regular appraisal of the teaching force, but little has yet been said about the nature of the system to be introduced. Recent government White Papers, however, have stressed that there should be periodic appraisal of individual teachers which includes lesson observation, an examination of pupils' work and the teachers' total contribution to the school. It is only possible to speculate at this stage what developments may take place with regard to teacher appraisal in Britain as a whole. Nor is it clear whether schools themselves will be given responsibility for appraisal or whether it will be undertaken by outsiders such as inspectors. However, there have been, in a minority of schools, pioneer schemes for teacher appraisal which had been developed prior to, and perhaps in anticipation of, government pronouncements and proposed legislation. It is to these pioneer schemes that this paper will address itself.

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The Open University Research Project

In 1984 the School of Education at the Open University set up a research project into 'the nature, impact and effectiveness of schemes for teacher appraisal'. The project is directed by Professor Desmond Nuttall and Mr. Philip Clift, and runs for two years, from October 1984 to September 1986. The aims of the project are as follows:

(1) To collect information about pioneer schemes for teacher appraisal and to classify them in terms of their salient characteristics.

(2) To carry out case studies of schools whose schemes are representative of this classification.

(3) To assess the impact of these schemes on the schools and their benefits in terms of school improvement.

(4) To disseminate information about teacher appraisal as it develops.

To achieve these aims we envisaged that the project would have two stages. The first stage would be one of information gathering and classification of the information collected. For the second stage the impact of the schemes would be assessed through conducting case studies of schemes in operation. This paper reports on the first stage of this project.

The concern of our project is with appraisal schemes operated by individual schools and not Local Education Authorities, few of which have developed schemes to date. We have not imposed any boundaries on the sorts of appraisal scheme we are interested in and consequently quite a wide variety of different types are included in our research. For each school we collected details about the institution itself and, in particular, information on the following:

the purpose(s) of the scheme
who is appraised
whether the scheme is voluntary or compulsory
what appraisal methods are used
what other information is used
what forms and documents are used
what records/reports are kept
who has access to records/reports
the frequency of appraisal
what changes have been produced by the operation of the scheme
how (or if) the scheme has been altered since its inception

In order to collect information about existing schemes for teacher appraisal we placed a number of advertisements in the educational press in September 1984. The advertisement requested schools which had set up a scheme to contact us and to send information about it. This strategy has provided us with information on 56 individual schemes.

Firstly we roughly categorised the information contained in the letters and documents sent to us by the schools in response to our advertisement. Aggregating this categorisation, we produced a brief questionnaire to send to those schools from which we had had little information. At the same time we prepared a data-base on a micro-computer and entered the information about schools as it was received, adding extra categories as necessary. Each school was then sent a print-out of its data-base entry, with the request that its accuracy be checked. We also asked what each school might wish to add to the categorisation for completeness. The resulting data-base was then included in 'A First Review and Register of School and College Based Teacher Appraisal Schemes' (Turner, G. & Clift, P. May 1985). It has been made available at cost of production and aims to create a network of schools and colleges sharing ideas and good practice.

Teacher Appraisal in Britain

Staff appraisal seems to be taking a very different form in Britain from that in the United States for a number of historical reasons. In the USA staff appraisal has developed mainly along summative lines as a basis for the initial certification of teachers and for the renewal of contracts. In Britain staff appraisal has traditionally been the responsibility of LEAs and is carried out by a team of local inspectors or advisers who usually have considerable experience in teaching. The purposes of such appraisal of individuals have tended to be to assess probationary teachers, to advise on appointments and promotions and to look into cases of poor performance. Periodical appraisal of non-probationary teachers does not normally take place, although many LEAs carry out inspections of schools. Staff appraisal is also undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate as part of their own inspection procedures or in cases where they are invited into schools because of problems. However, individual teachers are not identified in reports of HMI or LEA inspections: concern is with the school as a whole rather than the performance of individual teachers.

In the schools included in our 'Review and Register ...' periodic appraisal of individual teachers is undertaken by senior personnel within schools. It seems to have emerged as a management tool designed, in many cases, to boost morale at a time of falling rolls when promotion prospects become much more limited, and to assist redeployment. In the main, British schemes seem to be geared to formative appraisal and originate partly from schemes to promote curriculum review and institutional self-evaluation. The models of appraisal adopted owe more to schemes in use in industry and commerce and much less to initial training systems than is the

case in the USA. There is an emphasis on staff development and training rather than hiring and firing. Those schools in Britain which are adopting schemes seem to have borrowed many ideas from industrial practice and there are striking similarities between the school schemes revealed by recent research (Turner and Clift 1985; HMI 1985; Suffolk Education Department 1985) and the industrial schemes revealed in company surveys such as that of Gill (1977). Common features are the use of appraisal interviews, 'target setting' and delegation of appraisal to 'middle' managers. Appraisal through observation of lessons is not a feature of many British school schemes although experiments are taking place in some schools. Furthermore, the notion of competency-based teaching does not seem to have caught on in Britain at all despite promotion of the idea by the Further Education Unit (FEU 1982).

To summarise, schemes of teacher appraisal set up in British schools tend to have the following features:

(1) Appraisal is routine and on-going.

(2) The system is explicit rather than implicit.

(3) There is a discernable methodology. Teachers are aware of what methods are used, what evidence is sought and what records are kept.

(4) There is follow up. This might be in the form of extra training, changing institutional arrangements or career decisions.

Schemes operate with varying degrees of formality and also vary in that some are voluntary and others are compulsory.

Types of Appraisal Scheme

From the data collected, we have identified four basic approaches to the appraisal of teachers within schools in Britain:

(a) Appraisal Interview by Senior Management

Schemes of this type usually feature an annual review of a teacher's work by senior management (the Head or the Deputy Head or both). The previous year's achievements are appraised and, based on the evaluation made, targets are set for the next year. Given that there is no systematic observation of teachers at work, the evaluation of classroom practice can only be based on indirect sources of evidence and the interviewer's own knowledge and opinions.

(b) Observation and Interview by Senior Management

Appraisal schemes of this type have an interview with is very similar to those described in (a) above, but in addition lessons are observed by senior management - usually the Head. In contrast to (a) therefore, direct evidence on lessons is available. It should be pointed out that the observation undertaken as part of these schemes tends to be of a high inference nature - what is being observed and why is not always explicit. Observation schedules tend not to be used.

(c) Departmental Review

In larger schools, the requirement for in-depth evaluation by senior management, including lesson observation, can be met by undertaking reviews of one department at a time. Not only are the individual teachers in the department observed and interviewed, but the policies and practices of the department as a whole are also appraised. Attention is given to aspects

rarely covered in annual interview schemes, such as pupils' work, methods of assessment, syllabuses and timetabling arrangements. In the case of departmental reviews, lesson observation seems to be more intensive and systematic than in (b) above. Checklists and observation schedules seem to play a part in many of these schemes. However such schedules also tend to specify items of a high inference nature.

(d) Schemes Devolved to Middle Management

Owing to the time-consuming nature of appraisal and the belief in some schools that all staff should be actively involved in it, many schemes have been developed in larger schools which include middle management in conducting appraisals. In many cases, Heads of Departments conduct interviews with all the staff in their department, set targets for individuals and write up and agree a record of the interview. This is then made available to senior management. In some cases the appraisal need not be conducted by a senior member of staff. As well as Heads of Departments, Heads of Years might also involved in conducting appraisals. Some schools have developed two-tier schemes which include an academic and a pastoral appraisal interview.

Methods of Appraising Teachers

A number of appraisal methods are used in British schemes. Some, such as appraisal interviews, are common to virtually all the schemes we have identified, whilst others are less common. Below is a list of the methods used:

(1) Observation of teachers at work in the classroom and elsewhere.

(2) Appraisal interviews: to discuss past work and future developments.

(3) Use of documents and records: such as mark books, exam results, pupils' work, syllabuses, use of resources etc.

(4) Consultation with others: other teachers, pupils, advisers, etc.

(5) Self-Evaluation: drawing on teachers' own perceptions of their performance.

In different schemes these methods take on different forms. The appraisal interview for example can take on different styles as can be seen below:

Appraisal Interviews

Differing styles

(1) Facilitated Self-Evaluation
Interviewer seeks to promote self-criticism by raising particular issues.

(2) Two-Way Exchange
Both parties discuss each other's work. Each person needs to have considerable knowledge of the other's work. In practice there tends to be an appraiser and an appraisee but the latter is encouraged to raise matters concerning the appraiser and how they have helped or hindered performance.

(3) Judgemental Evaluation
Interviewer makes criticisms of other person's work. Such criticisms are based on evidence acquired before the interview.

From our observation of schemes in practice it seems that many interviews fall somewhere between (1) and (3).

Educational Significance of the Project

Most British school schemes are designed for formative appraisal - to facilitate staff development. The most common development which schemes have produced is some kind of in-service training. Other changes and developments claimed include:

greater self-awareness
clarification of responsibilities
curriculum change
improved motivation and morale
awareness of strengths and weaknesses
an increase in job satisfaction
new courses introduced
modification of subject options
improved performance
improved teacher-pupil relations
promotion
resignation
planning for staff development
production of job descriptions
revision of timetable

It must be pointed out, however, that many schools also claim that little or nothing has resulted from appraisals, whilst the activities themselves have been very costly in terms of time.

Conclusion

In Britain staff appraisal seems to be emerging in a different way from the USA. In addition to traditional assessment by LEA inspectors or advisers, schools are increasingly developing their own internal schemes, many of which seem to have been influenced by industrial practice. The primary aim of such schemes seems to be formative: they are designed to promote job satisfaction, to identify further training needs and to guide future deployment. The method most commonly used is that of an appraisal interview by a senior member of staff. So far the idea of competency-based teaching has not met with approval in Britain. Nevertheless central government has been attempting to introduce systematic staff appraisal by employers for summative purposes. At present such appraisal is merely advocated in government pronouncements, but the Secretary of State for Education and Science has announced recently that legislation is to be introduced to impose staff appraisal on LEAs. Such a system now seems unlikely to include 'merit pay' but it will be designed to bring about the removal

from the profession of those considered to be irremediably incompetent. The precise nature of the system to be introduced is still not known and could depend on negotiations over teachers' pay and conditions of service.

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